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Negotiating Nationhood, Renegotiating Nationhood: Canada's Nunavut and Nunavut's Canada¹ by Peter Jull²

THE NORSE ON NUNAVUT....

c. AD 985... For three days they sailed with the wind from the southwest until they saw a third land. This land had high mountains, capped by a glacier. [Bjarni said] "this land seems to me to offer nothing of use."

...

c. AD 1000... Once they had made the ship ready they put to sea [in south-west Greenland] and found first the land Bjarni and his companions had seen last. They sailed up to the shore and cast anchor, put out a boat and rowed ashore. There they found no grass, but large glaciers covered the highlands and the land was like a single flat slab of rock from the glaciers to the sea. This land seemed to them of little use. Leif then spoke: "As far as this land is concerned it can't be said of us as of Bjarni that we did not set foot on shore. I am now going to name this land and call it Helluland [stone-slab land]."

They then returned to their ship, put out to sea and found a second land [Labrador]...

Greenlanders' Saga, Anon., trans. Keneva Kunz (p. 219, Fitzhugh & Ward 2000).

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to sketch how Inuit and the Canadian public, and Inuit organisations and the Canadian government, revised Northern and national outlooks and political culture in the process of creating Nunavut. This includes simplified accounts of the evolution of two sets of opinion, Inuit/Northern and Canadian/Southern. Wider and deeper historical context is found in Jull 2001a & 2001c, and the Nunavut narrative in more detail in Hicks & White 2000. There are already many accounts of the Inuit social and cultural background, and political campaign and negotiations to achieve Nunavut, together with its gradual recognition, formal establishment, and significance as a precedent for others.³ Rather than go over such ground in detail the present sketch has its own function. It may also suggest parallels to indigenous peoples in Australia, Scandinavia, and elsewhere.

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³ Readily available are Brody 1975; 1987 & 2001; CARC 1993; Creery 1994; Dahl *et al.* 2000; Fenge 1993 & 1994; Hicks & White 2000; Jull & Craig 1997; Jull 1991a; 1991b; 1992, 1994b; 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a; & 2001b; Kusugak 2000; Merritt *et al.* 1989; Purich 1992; Rasmussen 1927; Soublière & Coleman 1999; & Tester and Kulchyski 1994.

Europeans attempted to explore and exploit Canada from AD 1000, as we know from Icelandic sagas and archeological remains on the Inuit and Algonquian Arctic and Atlantic coasts (Jones 1986; Fitzhugh & Ward 2000). After episodic contacts with Canada which probably continued for 500 years, better known European efforts began in 1497 with the Cabot voyages sponsored by the British. There may be many unknown contacts, e.g., it now being clear that fishing and whaling took Europeans to the western and north-western Atlantic in the 1400s. The Cartier visits from France began in 1534, and from the earliest 1600s determined settlement and trade by the French succeeded in what are now Canada's Atlantic provinces, plus Quebec and Ontario. The history of indigenous-white relations in Canada is told by Miller (2000).

The first Norse visitors declared Nunavut 'good for nothing' or 'of little use', and Voltaire would later dismiss all Canada as *quelques arpents de neige*, 'a few acres of snow'. However, Europeans visited Canada's coasts, islands, and mainland primarily for timber (the early Norse, and the British and Canadians from Napoleonic wars onward), fish and whales (many peoples), and furs (initially as a by-product of fishing, fish-drying, and exploration activities), with Martin Frobisher's efforts at 16th century mining in the vicinity of Nunavut's new capital, Iqaluit, completing the picture of Canada's essential worth in European eyes – i.e., a resource hinterland. The fur trade saw indigenous peoples as valued producers and traders across Southern Canada until the 1820s, and until our own time in parts of the North (Ray 1996; Miller 2000). The other motive for contact was curiosity which took purposeful form from the 15th century as Europeans, including the British and French, sought to navigate a way through or around Canada to reach the Orient. La Salle's 17th century farm at the first major rapids blocking the wide St. Lawrence River's access to the centre and west of the continent, now a suburb of Montreal housing Inuit offices among other things, was named 'China' (*la Chine*, now *Lachine*) by that facetious traveller of the Mississippi and American West.

Canada was a place of surprises. The warm ocean currents of Europe's Atlantic coast sweeping up into the Arctic Ocean still delude Norwegians who live at higher latitudes into thinking Canadian locations must be relatively mild. Some of them tell of arriving ill-prepared for field-work in Labrador. The Labrador current, Hudson Bay, and continental climate make Canada very inhospitable for temperate-climbed Europeans when summer and fall are over. Minus 40 in much of Canada in January – like Plus 40 in much of Australia in January – tested newcomers. In Canada the early white settlement history was terrible – the death toll through long winters often leaving almost nobody alive to stagger down to the shore to meet next year's ship. Often indigenous peoples kept the whites alive with hunting, food gathering, and knowledge of bush medicines, and proper clothing and footwear. Few whites who live or travel in Nunavut today are foolish enough not to adopt Inuit-style clothing.

Indigenous peoples and Europeans had the usual mixed and often uncomprehending relations (Damas 1984; Fitzhugh 1985 & 2000; Miller 1991 & 2000; Trigger 1978). The Norse relied heavily on aggression, iron war axes, and swords for getting acquainted, a poor choice for people who expected to live and settle in the region and draw on resources far from their home communities. As things turned out the Greenland Norse were extinct some centuries later with help from climate change no less than Inuit and Algonquian hostility. Now research in Arctic Canada is focused on the extent of Norse-Inuit inter-action – the more intriguing because Norse

materials keep turning up in Inuit ruins – but there is no evidence of any sustained peaceful co-existence. The Norse established a base on the northern tip of the northern peninsula of Newfoundland island.⁴ Their leader, Leif Eriksen, claimed political rights to call and lead an assembly, a right murderously enforced later by his psychotic sister Freydis with her axe (Jull 1998a; Wallace 2000). The Norse had no thought of including Inuit or Indians in their putative Canadian realm,⁵ or – according to some saga material which would make Leif a new-minted Christian zealot – of sharing their new religion and its teachings of peace with these peoples.⁶ In other words, they set an example in patronising and distant Eurocentric relations with indigenous peoples, a pattern which only began to change in some countries, or some parts of some countries, a thousand years later.

The later political strivings of French-speaking and English-speaking nations or national communities in Canada, and their inter-cultural accommodation – and the accommodation of indigenous and other peoples – have become a principal ‘story’ in Canadian political history. They are discussed by Peter Russell (1993; 1999-2000); and by Ignatieff (2000); Kymlicka (1998); Saul (1997); and Tully (1995). For indigenous nationhood see also Russell at this conference (2001). One may say that:

Canada’s indigenous peoples have had full access as individuals to elections, parties, and the national political system for 40 years at most. Indigenous locations, small numbers, culture, and distance from Canadian socio-economic norms make many of them marginal participants today. ... Indigenous peoples have been political collectivities vis-à-vis the White Man in Canada implicitly and explicitly for 400 years... and continue to be so today. Group identity and cohesion have been the main reasons for any benefits and influence they have gained. (Jull 2001a, 43)

In Canada as a whole indigenous people were brushed aside after the War of 1812 (*sic*, actually 1812-14) and giant 1820s fur companies’ merger. The indigenous time as allies and primary producers was now eclipsed by their role in white minds as obstacles to white settlement and development (Miller 2000). That attitude in official circles and public minds has only changed among the more enlightened, slowly, since 1945, a story recounted elsewhere (Miller 2000; Jull 2001a).

⁴ Now fully excavated and a World Heritage Site, L’Anse aux Meadows:

http://www.parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/parks/newfoundland/anse_meadows/anse_meadows_e.htm

⁵ At least one saga, Snorri’s great saga of King Olaf Haraldsson the Saint (St Olaf, or King Olaf II), refers to Leif Eriksen as ‘king’ later in his career. Holy King Olaf wanted to exile another lesser king to Leif’s care in Greenland after an attempt to kill Olaf.

⁶ During the writing of this sentence I have checked with translator Keneva Kunz in Reykjavik. She tells me that the other key saga, Erik the Red’s Saga, closely related to its heroine Guðrīd the Wide Travelled, Leif Eriksen’s sister-in-law and herself a Vineland voyager and Greenland resident, may well have been written later at her Icelandic family farm or in the neighbouring monastery endowed by her family.

POST-WAR INNOCENCE

In Canada after the profound horrors of the Depression of the 1930s and War of the 1940s the North became another metaphorical New World. The country had been forced to 'discover' Inuit and other Northern peoples through War and Cold War. Weather, radar, and aviation facilities brought Americans and Canadians into remote parts of Canada, Alaska, and Greenland. Here were people living in animal skins, and shacks or turf- and rock-walled houses when not in snow-houses, apparently poor in the booming post-war promised land of plenty. The humiliations of material need in Depression and the bumptious Wartime faith in material organisation, production, and transformation to solve all ills, D-Day style, found in the North a new project. Steel, roads, construction, large pieces of equipment, transport – physical conquest was envisioned.

Another dimension was the notion that Canada could be a great nation, a greatness usually considered as material increase and expansion of human settlement. On the map we could assume that all those trees, and, beyond them, bleak tundras – and all the minerals lying beneath – would transform us. But one constant in even the crassest dreams was an end of racism. Canadians took very seriously the defeat of Nazi race theories and the new era's ideals centred in the United Nations. Inevitably the notion of equality meant having Inuit look and live 'like us', a fact which accounts for such things as a modern Arctic of suburban post-war bungalows. (Consider heating costs in the treeless windswept Arctic!)

Equality was interpreted as uniformity, so Inuit children were soon learning to read picture books full of trees and family dogs and cats. For Inuit a thrill of the first trip south is the expectation of seeing trees. Governments driven by justified fear of famine and practical considerations of administrative economy in the 1950s began gathering the scattered Inuit camps into central villages around trading posts, mission churches, schools, nursing clinics, etc. (Jull 2000c; Tester & Kulchyski 1994) The village sites were sometimes traditional and sometimes chosen for their ease of annual re-supply by sea from Southern Canada. Inuit elders who had made decisions and directed family activity were now replaced by young white administrators who supervised an 'acculturation' process, as it was often called. The distance from hunting grounds, the need for social assistance, the fear of leaving children behind (because assistance was dependent on placing children in school), the end of a way of life, and the discovery by annual sea-borne medical teams of the immense proportion of Inuit suffering from tuberculosis and their removal to faraway hospitals left Inuit disoriented or in shock. This is the world into which many Inuit leaders who sought and fought for Nunavut were born – they recall happy early childhood 'on the land' and then confusing lives in new villages.

LEARNING THE HARD WAY

Space had always been important to Inuit. If you were having trouble with your neighbour he would wake one morning and find your family vanished, moved to another location. Now Inuit were increasingly living cheek by jowl in rows of little 'pre-fab' cabins or houses. The old hunting life was not possible, removed from the

seasonal hunting and fishing places, and population concentrations in new places meant that local resources were quickly depleted. The impact on a widely dispersed hunter-gatherer society of all these changes may be imagined.

Canada has had a not always satisfactory discussion of these matters. Inuit have been more focused on the future than the past in the unsentimental spirit – ‘It can’t be helped!’ – which has become a cultural hallmark to outsiders. Former administrators have viewed criticism of particular outcomes as criticism of their good intentions. And the Inuit who could say most are, for the most part, dead. The issue of some Inuit families moved from Northern Quebec to the High Arctic, ‘the High Arctic Exiles’, has become a case study in apparently futile argument (Tester & Kulchyski 1994; Jull 1994a). For whites and especially those who were directly involved, the question is their honour as public officials and integrity in recounting motives and events from the early/mid-1950s; for Inuit involved who were children at the time the issue now is the powerlessness and confusion of their people then, and the related standing of their culture and society, *vis-à-vis* the White Man. Nunavut and Nunavik (Northern Quebec’s Inuit territory) with their Inuit-controlled public bodies and access to senior governments are a ‘happy ending’ to that story. Truly, it could not happen again. (The feature coverage in *The Weekend Australian* [Toohey 2001] of Pintupi moved around Central Australia this year by baffled white administrators recalls the mid-1950s in Nunavut regions, although 1950s Nunavut was not a land of 5-star hotels, jumbo jets, indigenous or ecological tourism like today’s Red Centre.)

Schooling of Inuit began to turn out young people articulate in English, persons willing and able to talk back to the White Man, to fight for respect for their families and culture. They knew that Canada’s lofty ideals stated in international fora bore no resemblance to Inuit and Indian administration at home. From the mid-1960s they and non-indigenous support groups began to challenge Northern policies and the direction of the federal and NWT governments. This was the first impulse of indigenous politicisation heard and felt by the White Man. It threw back at him his talk of opportunity and equality by pointing out that almost all the jobs, new housing, discount goods, and other perks were available to whites only who were supposedly only in the North to serve the Inuit. Administering indigenous peoples became the principal Northern economy. (For Australian parallels see Crough 1993; 2001.)

By the mid-1960s it was clear that the White Man’s paternalism was not solving indigenous problems, or was creating as many new problems as were solved, as a reading of opening speeches by elected members of the NWT Council at any session well illustrates. The bitterness and confusion in indigenous villages was all too evident, while white officials and politicians often lamented ‘apathy’ among ‘un-enterprising’ Inuit. Inuit were very enterprising in ways which mattered to them of course, whether hunting caribou or resisting assimilation. Government papers prepared for the NWT Council sessions were relentlessly optimistic, but the real state of the territory was revealed in the unsparing annual reports of the Chief Medical Officer. Government was always ready to try a new program to help, however, and finally fell back on the Canadian opiate of us all, ‘ice’ hockey.⁷

⁷ Is there any other kind?

From mid-1968 the search for ‘frontier’ oil and gas in particular, and minerals, became frenzied in the NWT. The presence of so many whites, their aircraft and seismic test explosions disturbing wildlife and hence Inuit food harvesting, and tracked vehicles tearing up the tundra – the sheer ignorance and negligence of white official and industrial practice in relation to lands, sea ice, and seas – now panicked the older Inuit generations. If many lacked confidence to argue human rights, they had no trouble – through interpreters – in arguing caribou rights.

So the Inuit generations joined in a protest movement which soon centred on land and sea claims, and the demand for a self-governing territory, ‘our land’, *nunavut* in the Inuit language. From the mid/late 1960s first the Inuvialuit (Western NWT Inuit) and then other Inuit, as well as Dene and Métis of the NWT, talked, organised, and created their ‘native movement’ assisted by non-indigenous support groups and by new federal ‘citizenship’ funds. ‘Citizenship’ to Ottawa no longer meant merely invisibility and passive rights, but the active opportunity for indigenous peoples to become players in Canadian political life and policy development despite a national political system stacked against them. Party political activity and support were forbidden as uses of these funds, of course. This nation-wide indigenous ‘core funding’ program with firm multi-year block grants was Canada’s most inspired policy reform, enabling many others.

CANADIAN INCORPORATION

In 1953, nearly a full millennium after the first Norse visits, Canada recognised and incorporated Nunavut into politico-administrative structures (Tester & Kulchyski 1994; Robertson 2000, 107-208). The Canada in which Nunavut would emerge was also ready for change. Those of us who came into positions of influence and responsibility from the mid-1960s through 1980s had been brought up on large Mercator projection maps where Canada surged off into pink British Empire infinity at the top edge. This visibly enormous Canada relative to little Australia near the bottom, for instance, accounts for Canadian visitors having a shrunken sense of Australian distances. There was so much room on the map that one would see ‘Coppermine’ written on the Arctic coast. Four of us, Yellowknife-based labourers, chartered a small plane in summer 1961 and flew there, I having assumed all my life a substantial Coppermine to be seen. We found there two minuscule mission churches, a tiny nursing station, the little Hudson’s Bay Company trading post, a weather station painted in DayGlo orange, and a handful of Inuit tents. Today Coppermine has resumed its Inuktitut name, Kugluktuk, and is a substantial Inuit-run town of over 1400 people, the westernmost settlement in Nunavut, physically resembling any Canadian Prairie suburb except for some rocky bluffs and an ocean view.

Canadians had a sense of the North as vast and indestructible, an emptiness awaiting the transforming energy and will of Southern Canadians to amount to something. A particular interest was the tremendous potential wealth the region was assumed to hold. It has been a *cliché* in Canada, notably in political speeches, to speak of ‘Canada, a Northern nation’ or ‘an Arctic country’. Such utterances in print or voice media either left the matter there, a mere rhetorical flourish, or conjured a futuristic technological vision or two of a busy resource frontier where fantastic modes of transport and comfortable suburban lives would thrive. Indigenous peoples were

either missing or totally assimilated in such visions. It was assumed by government and the Canadian public that if those people were to have any future other than to be left entirely alone as living museum pieces, all the makings would come from the South as had already occurred with missionary Christianity and the Mounties. New ideas, language, lifestyles, learning, etc. – as well as building materials, civil servants, and public institutions – would be required. The North's only destiny, or choice of destinies, was to remain a place where backward people lived backward lives dressed in animal skins, or, to become a replica of Southern Canada with the black hair and high cheekbones of children the only clues to Northern uniqueness.

Meanwhile the North was a place for the white man's adventures, 'Man against Nature', with the actual Inuit and Indian inhabitants simply ignored or the subject of a condescending, 'comical', or wondering anecdote or two.⁸ This was purely and simply the White Man's blank emptiness – if anything was to be there, or was going to happen, whites would do it. Then the federal government in the late 1950s and early 1960s, assisted by new Inuit arts and crafts (often in new media, e.g., stone-cut graphics), began to make Nunavut especially – and the indigenous NWT and Northern Quebec more widely – a sort of national novelty. Positive and colourful tales of modernisation and new projects made Inuit emblems of a new Canada, a fashion increasingly derided and resented by these 'smiling Eskimos' themselves as they realised the use being made of them.

So when Indian and Inuit youth began to contest our plans, assumptions, ideals, and even our previously unquestioned motives – or rather, to contest them in our own language – at the very moment in the mid- and late-1960s when the NWT government was being formed fully 'for their benefit' and in their midst, it came as a shock. The insolence of youth, indeed! It is not that their elders had not spoken, but they had done so in tongues we did not know, and quietly, and so were easily ignored. Inuit refusal to yell and pound the table has been a major political liability to this day. Federal ministers think they are not really serious or demanding because of their quiet dignity. Inuit believe that only bad children display temper when they don't get their way – adults should not behave thus.

LEGITIMACY AND INSTITUTIONS

The new indigenous-white conflict in the NWT swallowed many issues. Indeed, *any* issue became hostage to it, whether bird counts or national defence. The real issue was the legitimacy of white rule. Canada's entire Northern policy since the 1960s may be seen in fact and in spite of itself as the concession by Ottawa of substantial political, legal, cultural, and environmental rights, powers, and benefits to Northern peoples *as peoples* in exchange for their acceptance in fact – if not always in words – of Canadian constitutional and institutional structures. Governments and especially government lawyers prefer not to acknowledge this explicitly, of course.

Conflict has taken many forms. For instance, government mistakes in counting caribou and resulting tough quotas and hardship for Inuit dependent on caribou for food became a major issue feeding the Nunavut movement. For all Inuit it was a

⁸ The current fashion of new or reprinted books of fiction, non-fiction, fantasy, and history on the Arctic and Antarctic seems anachronistic, on recurs in 40/50-year cycles.

symbol of official arrogance and white incompetence in crucial matters. The fact that governments could not or would not speak to Inuit in their own language also affected everyone. School and health removal policies inimical to Inuit values and wishes were especially sensitive. The careful creation of local government councils as training grounds for Inuit citizenship, the principal proposal and whole-hearted policy resulting from the Carrothers inquiry (1966), failed its biggest test by allowing Inuit only to deal with matters of little interest to them while their real concerns – language policy, schooling and curriculum, health care, game management, land and sea rights, environmental protection, development regulation – were not included. They turned to their land rights and self-government movement in hope of change. By attacking that movement's organisations as illegitimate (because ethnically-defined) and thereby defending visible white dominance, the federally-appointed head of NWT government unwittingly strengthened and legitimised the indigenous movement.

Ottawa and its NWT government offshoot wanted to see a genuine multi-racial NWT, this a reasonable dream of idealistic post-war men who felt revulsion against Hitler, fascism, and racism. (There were almost no women in high posts till later.) They wanted to ignore the Indian Act, the old treaties (which had never had more than token implementation in the NWT), and markers of difference. Indigenous people, however, turned to such forms as reinforcement of cultural identity. Inuit had the additional asset of being the overwhelming population majority throughout the entire region north of the tree-line, i.e., their traditional homeland, a third of Canada from Northern Labrador, through Northern Quebec and Nunavut to Beaufort Sea coasts and the Mackenzie River Delta. They had another asset well known on all sides but rarely mentioned publicly or in print: because Inuit lived far beyond white settlement or areas coveted for settlement, agriculture, or any extensive white purpose, and were virtually unknown as people or a people, as well as absent from historical and contemporary scenes of conflict with whites, they were deemed to be altogether nicer and more reasonable than Indians. Furthermore, they did not talk in terms of 'nationhood' or 'sovereignty', or broken compacts and bad faith, terms used by many Indian leaders, terms the more unsettling to Canadians in light of Quebec aspirations of nationhood and sovereignty. Inuit spoke of practical and homely problems of their political and legal disadvantage in school, hospital, or village in ways understandable to anyone. Of course the White Man had never negotiated with Inuit about anything but merely added their lands and seas to his maps.

The status of the NWT and Yukon, 40% of Canada's land area, was unclear, even in Ottawa. There were those who saw the North as a vast potential treasure house which could enrich the whole country, no small consideration after the Depression. There were so few people living there that 'of course' they could not be allowed to claim all that wealth for themselves and it would be immoral to give it to them. A second viewpoint was that the North should be kept a pristine preserve for scientific research. (Now we know that external pollution is degrading Arctic and Sub-Arctic land and marine eco-systems with minimal help from people living or working there, and that the 'pristine North' is far from pristine, e.g., CIIA-CARC 1991; CARC 1993-94.) An element of this second view for some was that indigenous peoples should be largely undisturbed, perhaps the sort of idealism which shaped Denmark's Greenland Inuit policy well into the 20th century (Schuurman 1976). A third view was that the NWT social and cultural situation needed unique politico-administrative responses, a view held by many middle-level federal Northern administration officials. This was

characterised by opponents as trying to keep Inuit and Indians in a zoo. A fourth view, strongly supported by many Northern whites, was that the federal government held the North in trust against the day when its component regions would become full and more or less 'normal' members of Canada's federal structure. In reality, elements of *all* these approaches have been evident in the past and today in the North. The fourth option of conventional politics has won the constitutional battle, although there are exotic elements added. The three territories of Nunavut, the remaining NWT (often putatively named *Denendeh*), and Yukon participate in many inter-provincial and federal-provincial forums and councils for policy sectors, and they attend conferences of Prime Minister and Premiers. Full federal-provincial integration remains problematic for practical reasons.⁹

Much conflict centred on the NWT Council, a.k.a. Legislative Assembly, and its status. It was the sole representative authority in the minds of NWT whites and initially for the federal government which had created and expanded it. However, the fact that it had limited power *vis-à-vis* Ottawa until well into the 1970s, and none on key questions of land, resource development, or, for Inuit, marine issues, plus its relentlessly and often fusty 'Anglo' traditional and ceremonial ways, emphasised its remoteness from Inuit, Dene, and Métis. (Of course, some indigenous individuals enjoyed its very obscurity.) Its elections were boycotted by the indigenous political associations, while its leaders and the federal NWT Commissioner denounced those associations as virtually racist and surely divisive. Therefore, 1979, when the long-serving Commissioner retired, when indigenous leaders dropped their boycott and some ran for election (one now, and half a dozen others since 1979, having become NWT Premier), and when a new Legislative Assembly of many able Dene, Métis, Inuit, and young progressive whites was elected, was an historical turning point. Indeed, the new members met in extraordinary early session and, as in the Tennis Court Oath, swept away the hardline Eurocentric constitutional and indigenous rights positions of previous Assemblies. They also created a committee to study the institutional and territorial legitimacy of the NWT (Jull 1992). The committee found that indigenous peoples did not accept the existing NWT and found 'the present geo-political structure of the Northwest Territories, including the institutions and practices of government, to be an interim arrangement' (quoted at Jull 1992, 12).¹⁰ The NWT then set about seeking solutions, first by holding a referendum in 1982. This endorsed dismantling the existing NWT to create Nunavut – by about 4-1 in the Nunavut area with the highest voter turnout there on record. The NWT assembly then sponsored a continuing Nunavut Constitutional Forum and Western Constitutional Forum to debate, devise, and broker new constitutional arrangements for both halves of the NWT. The first, in tandem with the Nunavut land claims negotiations, led to Nunavut's full formal creation in April 1999. The Western forum was unable to bridge the chasms among the peoples there and a process of regional and/or tribal negotiations is now fitting together a new NWT or *Denendeh* or *Nahandeh*, piece by piece, in a federally constructed territory within a federal country. (The Deh Cho or Slavey Indian region from the western villages of Great Slave Lake down the Mackenzie River to Wrigley and up the Liard River to British Columbia has been a

⁹ Apart from some strong provincial opposition to more mini-governments in Canada's federation and fear that Ottawa could 'buy' their support in future inter-governmental conflicts, practical workings of Canada's constitutional amendment formulae and Canada's complex tax revenue equalisation formulae will delay equality with provinces, see Robertson 1985.

¹⁰ What would a similarly frank inquiry find in Australia's Northern Territory?

classic study in principled political and constitutional negotiation in recent years, with a framework for negotiations now agreed, Deh Cho 2001.)

CULTURES MEETING

Conflict was only part of the story, of course. Over five decades Inuit and other Northern indigenous people grew familiar with more and more Canadian material culture as trading posts became supermarkets, schools brought audio-visual content, television made its appearance, and countless general meetings between the local community and visitors discussed issues great and small. Ottawa and the NWT government had plenty of money. Inuit travelled more and more for meetings and other work, or schooling, health, or family visits. Young people were becoming socialised in essential matters like ferocious support for the *Montreal Canadiens* hockey team, the stock phrases of North American sitcoms, and yearning for pizza. Inuit serving girls began to say 'Have a nice day!' in local hostel kitchens to their well-fed visitors. And some Inuit began to feel insulted that they were not connected to national road or rail networks. (Nunavut is linked to nowhere by year-round surface means, the villages lacking even such links with each other.) While more white jobs might be added in the administrative and service centres of Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge Bay in certain occupations, other communities became increasingly and visibly run by Inuit themselves in a new Inuitised Canadian – or Canadianised Inuit – way.

Other Inuit change – non-material or intangible – may be too hard to discern yet. However, it is interesting to note that the view of ES Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan from the early 1960s that Inuit would largely leap straight over literacy ('the Gutenberg galaxy') from oral culture to electronic facility has been borne out.

Then there were the negotiations. From the early 1970s Inuit were increasingly aware that they were engaged in a high-stakes negotiation. Initially perhaps few of them realised that the outcome would determine much of their future. Some would hope that life could continue as before if one spent as much time as possible on the floe edge, hunting, while many more hoped that if they had more time they might yet get their families and villages into better shape – after all, how could they hope to govern a huge territory if they could not run their own lives at home? The pressures of material and social change were relentless, however, as was the pressure from government and industry to determine the sub-surface resource potential of Arctic lands and seas. So young Inuit were drawn into political work of various types associated with claims, self-government hopes, or local self-government realities. The NWT/Nunavut was so greatly a public and service sector economy that there were positions for many willing and able to take them. But it is now clear that Inuit were involved in a much larger negotiation than that across any meeting table in Ottawa. With imperfect English and limited formal education they were negotiating the terms and framework for the continuation of their culture and society within the framework of a huge industrial state they barely knew. The pressure on individuals was terrible, and many suffered terrible physical and emotional effects – permanently damaged, maimed, or worse.

The literal negotiations about land, waters, and self-government, and their larger projection on society as a whole, were *de facto* citizenship and constitutional processes. Inuit and other indigenous peoples had been denied property or political rights by the White Man who had simply annexed them but now they were negotiating constitutional, political, and cultural status anew on the basis of their court-recognised native title, the failure of the White Man's administration and socio-economic policies in their homeland, industrial society's environmental impacts, and the moral *cachet* of their assertion of cultural and political autonomy. Indeed, the Nunavut self-government and claims teams maintained high moral and intellectual ground in constitutional, cross-cultural, and environmental matters, e.g., parading the quest for a Nunavut territory as Canada's first 'made in Canada' constitutional reform process since white settlement (Jull 1998b). Inuit were no longer forgotten people. For years the press and TV had brought news of their struggles into living-rooms across Canada. Far from threatening Canadian with dangerous-sounding political rhetoric or secession talk they spoke of basic local and family concerns like poisoned food sources and disruptive school or medical policies which anyone could understand. They won over enough Canadians and white *élites* to establish themselves as full Canadians, but a new kind of Canadians, with Nunavut a new kind of Canada (Jull 2000b). Inuit and others achieved much of this with a knowledge revolution, namely environmental science, through claims research and appearances before development review panels, turning the perceived blank emptiness or mystery of the White Man's North into something knowable and even familiar. This amounted to a subtle psychological winning of the South, a match for the earlier Southern physical possession of the post-war North.

Then Inuit made Canada and Canadians aware of the wider Circumpolar Arctic. Instead of completing a finite Canada visible on the map, Canadians were now dragged through that looking-glass into whole new vistas, an international Arctic of peoples, placenames, languages, and new self-governing entities previously unimagined, an amazing Inuit achievement (see 'Indigenous Internationalism', Jull 2001a, 33-36).

The effects on Canada were also great. For decades North American newspaper and magazine cartoons had used parka-clad Inuit and their snow-houses as the ultimate metaphor for isolation and remoteness.¹¹ Now Inuit had become real people. Many outsiders even knew that they only made snow-houses in emergencies, or for tourist festivals. Their patience in handling harsh weather and environment were no longer only unimaginable skills (like Aboriginal tracking in Australia) but also, often, determined human responses to *our* wasteful and irresponsible impact on their lives. They lacked a range of basic services and conditions which we took for granted in our southern towns and cities, or they had to sell off their birthright to obtain them. More importantly Canadians had turned away from a narrow Victorian style of paternalist indigenous and cross-cultural relations, from European ethno-cultural triumphalism, and welcomed non-European culture and people into full membership of a modern federation and welcomed their continuing uniqueness. Now at First Ministers Conferences – those great televised ceremonies of Canadian politico-cultural identity, legitimacy, and laying on of hands – there was even an interpreter-translator table for

¹¹ Many still do. Very often cartoonists get one detail wrong, placing penguins and polar bears in the same drawing, although the former are solely Antarctic and the latter solely Arctic creatures.

Inuktitut no less than for French and English simultaneous interpreting. Even if we didn't really understand Inuit we accepted them. After all, Canada is their country, and 'their country' within it really is *their country*.

CONCLUSIONS

The North was a huge and amorphous space, even changing confusingly with different map projections. It was a lot of nothingness where we could do almost anything, we thought. It only lacked people. But the people there have appeared as if from nowhere to set us straight, and have revealed new maps with intricate and old patterns of cultural and environmental connection, as well as unknown boundaries to baffle our scientists and bemuse our politicians. Rather than passively accepting our leftovers and second-hand culture, Inuit have drawn us into their own and their neighbours' world. The Arctic has proven not an end of our imaginings, a place to complete tidily, but a place of new peoples, ideas, opportunities, and demands if we are agile enough to meet them. Its challenge once thought in terms of physical mastery has become, instead, intellectual, temperamental, emotional, intuitive, and artistic. It has encouraged new ways of thinking among all Canadians, just as it has spawned a knowledge revolution in the sciences.

Canada had set out from the 1950s to create a society in the North in which Inuit, Indians, and Métis would become typical citizens assimilated into the political culture, lifestyles, wants, and material well-being of the White Man's contemporary society. An ironic and direct result of the means adopted was to trigger formation of indigenous ethno-regions and ethnic nations to dispute the White Man's hegemony and to replace it with negotiated variants, adding many constitutional and politico-administrative novelties to Canadian experience.

In this process many scattered Inuit hunter-gatherer camps developed ethno-political and ethno-regional self-consciousness and, finally, a new multi-regional community, Nunavut (Jull & Craig 1997; Jull 2001c). They are secure enough to include non-Inuit residents in their inclusive new term, *Nunavummiut*, today.

Other Canadians with the mentality of a colonial garrison or White Man's fringe in the 1950s, eyed the North as mysterious, dangerous, and inhabited by exotic beings – a place where a young white might have an icy adventure (not unlike young Viking kings 1000 years earlier in Sápmi, the 'Lappish' North of Europe, as recorded in sagas). They have come to respect the knowledge, courage, and adaptability of the Northerners, and are proud and respectful of those peoples as fellow citizens despite their very different backgrounds. Substantial Northern subsidies have never been a real public worry, despite some futile Right efforts to cite them to oppose Nunavut.

Education, generation change, more available information – it seems impossible to know how to account precisely for the evolution of the Canadian majority's attitudes in accepting and accommodating Inuit and other indigenous peoples. The Inuit movement from remote icons to real people with speaking parts *via* the media was undoubtedly important, as were larger continental and world currents. The presence in Ottawa – even in periods of political uninterest – of high officials and other

specialists with Northern knowledge and commitment, and firm national and prime ministerial standards on race and ethno-cultural relations, were probably crucial.

The search for and achievement of Nunavut changed Canada and changed Inuit, just as the reactions and responses to it among non-indigenous Canadians and their governments have also changed Canada. Canada has benefited in greater openness, acceptance of diversity, constitutional innovation (or renewal), and accommodation of difference, rather than insistence on uniformity. Now it is important that Nunavut and its Inuit benefit in the practical manner and to the full extent sought by all those Inuit and non-Inuit who fought the fight. That fight was for better government, new policies, and better outcomes in daily life. Meanwhile, Nunavut is and will remain an Inuit society, and non-Inuit who live and work there know, accept, and support that.

From the 1960s to the present Inuit and other peoples of Canada's Northern territories have had many bitter collisions with federal and territorial governments, with industry, and with tendencies ranging from animal rights to militarisation. Indigenous determination or sheer desperation has struggled with waffling, often well-meaning, and too often resource-greedy official intentions, resulting finally in explicitly and implicitly negotiated outcomes promising and delivering social peace. It is unfortunate that Australia's Prime Minister Howard so often in the 1999-2000 period dismissed 'negotiation' with indigenous peoples, as in his radio interview with John Laws on May 29, 2000, when he said that 'if there were ever any negotiation for a treaty... that would open up a divide rather than heal a rift.' (Howard 2000) Canadian experience has shown that negotiation is virtually the only workable or successful way to proceed.

MOVING ON

When asked about *Reconciliation* in Canada at a public forum in Brisbane, Australia, on August 13, 2001, Nunavut's first premier, Paul Okalik, replied that Canada did not have an Australian-style program for indigenous relationships. Indeed, some of us believe that Nunavut itself is a model for reconciliation with its negotiated indigenous constitutional relationships, reformed or new political institutions, clear enforceable land and sea rights, decision-making institutions in Inuit control, an increasingly indigenous public service, indigenous cultural autonomy and reinforcement, special mechanisms for indigenous economic and employment development, a full recognised indigenous political community with full and equal political membership in the opportunity and benefit structures of citizenship in the contemporary nation-state, and governing power for a large region.

In Brisbane, Premier Okalik also gave a number of examples of specific cultural, social, economic, and justice initiatives which the dual Nunavut claims and governance system was now able to undertake to achieve both better social outcomes and better relations between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures (2001a). He noted that such outcomes and the overcoming of past grievances had been a central motivation for him personally and for other Inuit in pursuing Nunavut. On August 15 at the National Press Club in Canberra the Premier spoke again (2001b), now in tandem with Australian best-known Aboriginal leader and *Reconciliation* figure, Patrick Dodson. The latter talked about Nunavut as an example of the spirit, realism,

and accommodation needed in Australia to make progress on indigenous issues for the good and reputation of all Australians.

Perhaps most affecting was what Premier Okalik said in both his speeches and the question-and-answer sessions following. Here was a man whose starting point in politics had been anger and painful conflict (including jail time) with the White Man's system. Now, still a young man, and with young children of his own, he talked publicly and privately with enthusiasm about working with non-Inuit as well as Inuit *within* Nunavut in joint problem-solving and creation of a new society. This is not without casualties – Inuit are demanding new standards of personal and professional conduct from leaders, and not a few of the celebrated old guard who fought so long to achieve Nunavut are falling short. (Alcohol and drug use, accountability for expenses and organisation funding, and violence against women and children have been principal current issues there as in Aboriginal Australia.) But *Inuit* are now debating and working with other *Inuit* to sort out these standards and define the new political culture. Also Premier Okalik spoke of work with Northern peoples and leaders *outside* Nunavut to achieve practical breakthroughs and new policies in a new climate of multi-racial and multi-regional cooperation. Certainly the needs of the northern two-thirds or three-quarters of Canada are work for many hands and have always needed the concerted efforts of many. That concerting of effort, or inclusiveness, only began when Inuit and other indigenous peoples began disputing the legitimacy and ill-suited practices of the White Man's paternal governance.

Premier Okalik also reminded us that achieving the claims settlement and launching the Nunavut government were merely steps. Although they looked immense and remote to many of us for two generations from the first talk of dividing the NWT, c. 1960, now they are only two more steps in an endless process. The day they were achieved new issues, needs, and approaches loomed up and few had time to celebrate. That is how life is in normal constitutional relationships. And Inuit and other indigenous self-determination achievements in Canada are nothing if not 'normal'. There are new opportunities and jobs for indigenous people, but daily life and public services continue, old problems continue (but now with greater expectation that indigenous persons will explore and announce solutions to these, soon!), and the life of the country as a whole and its complex networks of executive federalism continue to display both their flexibility and frustrations. There are initial problems of adjustment to and cooperation with new entities, but these are typical of any new official bodies and we should not be too quick to conclude that 'racism' or official hostility is always to blame for failures and oversights.

Something called 'parallelism' has entered indigenous policy debate, a new term in Canada's chronic separation phobia.¹² C. 1960 the Inuit lands which now make up Nunavut were a world wholly distinct, remote, unconnected from Canada. Since that time the two worlds have got to know each other, have had some quarrels, and have negotiated good relations. Today Canadians are proud to include and embrace

¹² Alan Cairns has raised this subject in thoughtful recent works, e.g., Cairns 2000 and Flanagan & Cairns 2001. He defines *parallelism*: 'The emerging paradigm, still in the making, which I call the parallelism paradigm, displays considerable sensitivity to the desire of Aboriginal peoples for some positive recognition, including self-governing powers, but pays lesser attention to what holds us together, to what prevents us from being strangers.' (Cairns 2000, 92)

Nunavut and Nunavummiut; most Nunavummiut are newly, fully, and demandingly Canadian, trying to take up the new opportunities enhanced or created by the Nunavut claims and territory governance outcomes in national society. I hope never to hear about 'parallelism' again – it will not be an issue in the Inuit North in my lifetime.

Having watched Nunavut change from a far place and populace absolutely remote from Canada in every cultural, linguistic, and lifestyle sense through a few decades of dramatic social and material acculturation, this followed by Inuit determinedly negotiating full equality in Canada on mutually satisfactory terms, I find it impossible to take seriously any suggestion that 'parallelism' means anything in the Inuit North.

Meanwhile a neutral but expert observer, the President of Iceland, whose academic research field has been northern small-nation governance, has told a gathering of Circumpolar peoples and governments:

[In the Circumpolar world] there is political innovation – we could even say political creation – that, in the last ten years, has dominated the evolution of the North. New states have gained independence; increased rights have been given to local and regional institutions. The decision-making structures are in a continuous flux and the classical question – Who governs, where and how? – now requires new answers, bringing into focus the nature of democratic accountability in the modern world. We could even say that the North has become a working laboratory of new political institutions and relationships: local, regional, national and global. (Grimsson 2000, 111)

A positive new phase in region- and society-building, and in Inuit political life and Inuit-white relations, has begun. It is producing hopeful and often novel results, truly a new society in the making.

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